

alsammon

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BY

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LEPROSY, SYPHILIS AND PLAGUE
EARLY PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS

Leprosy

VERY clear pictures of true leprosy are given in three mediæval treatises: one in the "Lilium Medicinæ," by Bernard Gordon, who is traditionally reputed to have been a Scotsman, and who taught at Montpellier between 1285 and 1307; another by Guy de Chauliac, who wrote his treatise on surgery at Avignon about 1363; and a third by Gilbert, the Englishman, whose "Compendium Medicinæ" was published in 1510. Nevertheless, the diagnosis of leprosy was probably made somewhat recklessly, and no doubt in the Middle Ages persons with other skin diseases, such as lupus or psoriasis, were sometimes segregated as lepers. Among the generally admitted Scottish lepers, the most distinguished was King Robert Bruce.¹

Early notices of leprosy



SKULL OF KING ROBERT BRUCE
showing chronic disease of facial bones, supposed to be leprosy
(From a cast in the Anatomical Museum, University of Edinburgh)

The earliest leper house founded in England, so far as is known, was the Hospital of St. Peter and St. Leonard, at York, founded in 936 A.D. by King Athelstane, which provided for 206 bedesmen. Another was endowed at Canterbury by Lanfranc, the first Norman Archbishop of that See. Others were founded later at Westminster, Southwark, Highgate and other places in London, and there were numerous other hospitals throughout England.² Sir James Y. Simpson collected references to over 100 leper establishments in that country.³

¹ "Chronicon de Lanercost" (Bannatyne Club), p. 259; also Sir J. Y. Simpson: "Archæological Essays," Vol. II., pp. 113-115. For a full discussion of the leprosy of King Robert, see Macarthur, *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, May, 1926.

² Creighton: "History of Epidemics in Britain," Cambridge, 1891, Vol. I., p. 86.

³ Simpson: "Archæological Essays," Vol. II., p. 19.

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